

Warsaw Pact Chains May Bind Two Ways

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The common view of the Warsaw Pact, that it is a paper alliance masking Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, has been broadly challenged by a Western expert.

In fact, argues Thomas W. Wolfe, the Warsaw Pact may be maturing into a real coalition matching Soviet dependence on East Europe with the region's demand for more power.

It would be "stretching things," writes Wolfe, author of the widely praised study "Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads," to say that the Pact faces the kind of open policy debates common in its Western counterpart, NATO.

But it "may be" that East Europe is pressing Moscow much as West Europe presses Washington for more influence on alliance strategy, sharing of military and economic burdens, and ultimately on the great issues bearing on war and peace.

Atomic Sharing

In a new study for the Air Force-supported Rand Corp., Wolfe says East Europe has "already moved along the road toward a nuclear posture"—it has missiles but not nuclear warheads under its control—and "may press harder for access to nuclear weapons."

Its pressure could mount, he suggests, if Soviet troops in East Europe were reduced and regional forces assigned a "cannon fodder" role, and if somehow East Europe came to doubt that the Soviet Union would defend it in a nuclear pinch.

He says, however, that Moscow may still doubt East Europe's reliability—Hungarian troops fell apart in the 1956 revolution there—and hence will hesitate to share nuclear control or command authority.

The Warsaw Pact was only a Soviet device until former Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev sought to make up for a cut in Soviet conventional forces by filling in with East Euro-

pean troops, according to Wolfe. Thus Moscow came to depend for its own defense on East Europe. Joint training exercises of the Pact, founded in 1955, began in 1961.

Dependence Growing!

On the surface, Soviet dependence ended when Moscow developed missiles powerful enough to be based on Soviet soil, but in fact dependence "is probably becoming greater"—chiefly because in a nuclear war it would be hard to bring large Soviet forces into play in Europe.

As the Warsaw alliance becomes more militarily integrated and interdependent, the East European members use their new leverage to assert national interests. This is the political effect, Wolfe says, pointing to maverick Rumania's recalcitrance in bloc military affairs.

He says the Pact's essential political use for the Russians is that it provides the basic treaty obligation binding East Europe to Moscow and thereby creating a bloc.

Nationalism Applied

The East European countries, already asserting their nationalism in other ways, "may now find themselves acquiring a more effective voice in the development of Warsaw Pact military planning and strategy," Wolfe suggests.

"If so, and one should stress the 'if,' the East European Pact partners may come to enjoy another attribute of national sovereignty, and a further diminution of Soviet tutelage and control over their destinies.

"Although it certainly would be unrealistic to suppose that the Soviet Union will cease to play a predominant role in Pact affairs, the situation at least suggests that the Pact may be evolving into an alliance of a more customary kind, subject in greater degree than hitherto to the interplay of coalition politics."